

Congresswoman NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ

Representing New York's 12th Congressional District

Ranking Democratic Member, House Small Business Committee



Investigation into SBA Disaster Loan Program Velázquez initiates GAO study for small businesses in NYC

Local small business owners and organizations joined Congresswoman Velázquez, Ranking Member of the House Small Business Committee, to announce that she will initiate a U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) investigation into why a significant number of small businesses throughout New York City did not receive Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster loans following the terrorist attacks of September 11.

"Small businesses make up 98 percent of all New York City businesses," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "And almost 14,000 applications were received for SBA disaster loans yet more than half of those were declined or withdrawn. Now that the deadline date for SBA disaster loans has come and gone, we are gaining a much clearer picture of how this program fell short for both businesses in New York City and across the country."

As the investigative arm of Congress, the GAO will examine why the SBA failed to provide loans to over half of the small businesses in New York City that applied for them. The study is intended to provide answers as to why businesses didn't get financial assistance and to determine how improvements can be made to successfully secure future loans for small businesses that face challenges resulting from disaster.

Congresswoman Velázquez also announced the introduction of her legislation, the Small Business Emergency Relief Act, which will provide grants to small businesses affected by September 11. In addition, it will allow those businesses that did receive assistance to convert their loans into grants.

"This legislation and the GAO investigation will shed new light on what happened and why businesses didn't get the help they so desperately needed," Con-



Congresswoman Velázquez speaks to a crowd on the steps of City Hall.

gresswoman Velázquez said. "The investigation will not only get us answers as to why assistance did not reach those in need, but it will also show us how to fix the problem in order to stabilize and spur business growth. Only then will our ailing economy come back to life."

Congresswoman Velázquez encouraged small businesses to contact GAO by calling (202) 512-8415 if their SBA disaster loan application was either denied or withdrawn.

Velázquez Awards \$180,000 to Sunset Park

The Sunset Park Business Improvement District (SPBID) was presented with a check in the amount of \$180,000 by Congresswoman Velázquez. She successfully secured the federal funding for the revitalization and beautification of 5th Avenue between 38th and 64th Streets, which is also known as the 5th Avenue Renaissance Project.

"The Sunset Park Business Improvement District has shown great dedication to creating a sense of community pride and stimulating the local economy," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "The 5th Avenue Renaissance Project is just one example of the commitment and remarkable work that this organization does."

The entire area is within the largest national historic district in the northeastern United States, and is anticipating major reconstruction. The SPBID was created in 1995 to revitalize the 5th Avenue shopping strip of Sunset Park, one of the fastest growing immigrant communities in Brooklyn. As a not-for-profit organization, it provides such services as sanitation,



SPBID president, Steve Petros, State Assemblyman, Felix Ortiz, Congresswoman Velázquez, Chair of Community Board 7, Joe Longobardi, SPBID Board Members, Bruce Rabinowitz, and Delvis Valdes, and Executive Director, Renee Giordano.

security, anti-graffiti, business promotion, outreach and advocacy and fundraising.

Bill Provides Jobs for Public Housing Residents

Local public housing tenants and organizations joined Congresswoman Velázquez to announce her new legislation, the Earning and Living Opportunities Act, which would provide jobs and other economic opportunities to low-income public housing residents in New York City.

“Currently, there are more than 400,000 residents living in New York City’s public housing developments. Unfortunately, less than half of those households include members earning an income,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “Given our weak economy and the city’s unemployment rate hovering at close to 9 percent, there is a strong need for employment opportunities in our communities.”

The legislation authored by Congresswoman Velázquez would enforce the Section 3 housing law, which requires local housing authorities that receive federal funding, like the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), to guarantee employment opportunities for low-income residents.

The Earning and Living Opportunities Act would require any contractor doing work on public housing to ensure that 20 percent of the jobs go to public housing residents. These jobs would be in skilled trades, and residents lacking training in these areas would be eligible for on-the-job training through a qualified apprenticeship program.

“I will be fighting for these changes at the federal level but in order for them to be effective, they must be implemented at the local level,” Congresswoman



Congresswoman Velázquez speaks to a crowd at a housing rally for creating jobs.

Velázquez said. “Section 3 has the ability to not only offer long-term career training to low-income members of the community, but also to give them what they need most – jobs!”

Velázquez Demands NYC Firehouses to Re-Open

In response to the closure of six local firehouses, Congresswoman Velázquez asked Secretary of U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Tom Ridge, to reconsider the decision due to homeland security concerns.

“Firefighters play a crucial role in responding to terrorist attacks and national emergencies,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “The closing of these firehouses in a high terrorist threat area during a time of heightened security only places vulnerable communities at an even higher risk.”

Engine Company 212 was the only firehouse serving as New York City’s sole low-level radioactive waste facility. A concern is that without an adequate emergency response, an attack or malfunction at this facility would likely cause catastrophic damage to the

entire city. Engine 204 was one of the first companies to reach the World Trade Center in the minutes following the attack.

The firehouse closures jeopardize other NYC communities, as fire companies are stretched thin struggling to serve more areas. Firefighters will be expected to meet these additional demands with fewer resources, which in turn compromises national terrorism preparedness.

“The Department of Homeland Security is responsible for protecting the nation against future terrorist attacks,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “I ask that they reopen these firehouses that are critical to the security and safety of NYC. I think it is important that they modify funding formulas for programs in order to prevent similar closings in the future.”

Velázquez Visits Two Local Non-Profit Organizations



Administrator Tony Yang-Lewis and Rep. Velázquez at Cobble Hill Health Center.

Congresswoman Velázquez visited the Cobble Hill Health Center and its new state-of-the-art Rehabilitation Institute to discuss conceptual plans for the facility’s future improvements and the Center’s desired “Assisted Living” facility. Velázquez also visited the Young Dancers in Repertory (YDR) who are seeking resources for expanding their programs.

“One of my main priorities is to provide assistance to hard-working organizations that serve our community and I enjoy seeing first-hand the positive impact that they are making for the elderly and youth of our neighborhood,” said Congresswoman Velázquez. “I look forward to working with them in order to cultivate their future growth.”

Cobble Hill Health Center is a non-profit nursing facility in Brooklyn providing a wide range of health care services for the frail elderly and physically disabled. YDR is a non-profit Brooklyn-based arts education organization, fostering growth in dance and communication for children, youth and the general public.

Grants Awarded to Our Community

Department of Health and Human Services

*Lutheran Medical Center \$336,960

For residency training in general dentistry

*Lutheran Medical Center \$192,140

For residency training in primary care

Department of Housing and Urban Development New York State

*Community Development Block Grant \$57,330,000

*HOME Investment Partnership Program \$40,101,000

*Emergency Shelter Grant Program \$2,954,000

*Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS \$2,327,000

City of New York

*Community Development Block Grant \$222,630,370

*HOME Investment Partnership Program \$129,144,702

*Emergency Shelter Grant Program \$7,480,000

*Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS \$60,315,000